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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

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U. S. Department of Ag.
Wednesday, April 1, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FOOD FOOLISHNESS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Listeners, something about the date today makes me think of all the food faddists and cranks in this round world -- makes me think of all the people who have played a year-round April fool prank upon themselves by taking up queer and -- alas! -- sometimes harmful notions about eating.

Of course, being a permanent April fool about some things does no harm. But foolish food ideas may be serious handicaps to the health of the family of the food faddist -- they may also have a bad effect on the family pocketbook.

Sincere diet faddists, and also diet quacks and fakers, are still going strong. Of course, the quacks and fakers change their tune with the time, and sad to say, ever since the scientists began to get at true facts about food, every since new discoveries about nutrition began to appear, they have flourished as never before. Under the guise of science, they have been handing out dietary prescriptions that no true scientist would endorse.

Just think of all the different food enthusiasms that have swept the country in recent years. One was the fad for the raw-food diet. The raw food enthusiasts believe that cooking is the curse of the race. Then, there are the vitamin-chasers who try filling up on yeast, or irradiated foods, or vitamin concentrates instead of eating a sensible all-around diet. Yes, and then there are the roughage-munchers, the bran and spinach boys, who think that refined foods will soon ruin the race.

Those are just samples of a few food April fools of my acquaintance. You can probably mention many more that you know.

But here is one point to remember about all such misguided diet notions. Most of them have a basis in scientific fact. But they have carried the fact to extremes, or have distorted the original truth. For example, the raw-food faddists are right in this -- that many of us need to eat more raw food. Also many of us would be in better health if we had more vitamins in our diet. And again, a lot of us would be better off if we ate more roughage. All quite true. But carrying these ideas to extremes is usually foolish, often expensive, sometimes harmful.

Just now one of the food fads that is going the rounds has to do with food combinations. The pronouncements of the promoters of this dietary have scared hundreds of people about eating different kinds of food at the same meal. The Department of Agriculture receives many letters from worried citizens asking if it is dangerous to eat starch and protein together, or sugar and milk, or milk and fish, and so on and so forth. You see, this new faddist diet taboo certain food mixtures that people have been eating for generations. It advises separating certain classes of foods, eating one kind of food at one meal, and another at another meal. This new and fashionable cure for what ails you lays down the law against eating starch and protein at the same meal. That means, give up those good time-honored combinations like meat and potatoes, and bread and milk, rice and cheese, egg on toast, and so forth.

Where did this diet fad get its start? Well, some years ago 2 French physicians reported that, in certain cases of illness, they had had good results from what they described the "disassociate diet." Please notice that these doctors used the diet only in certain cases of illness. They said nothing about its use for normal well people. But you would think this was going to be a national institution to hear people discuss it at bridge parties and teas these days. You will hear how it cured Mrs. So-and-So of some old trouble. You will hear that stout Mrs. Somebody Else got back her girlish figure on it.

The public has heard so much about this diet that people all over the land have begun to shiver at the thought of eating many of our best food combinations. Many people are afraid they have been living on poisons all these years, and many conscientious housewives spend hours trying to plan lunches that avoid protein, and dinners that contain no starch.

Listeners, the joke is on them. They're attempting the impossible. Some natural foods contain both starch and protein. You can't pry the two apart no matter how you try. Take some of our everyday foods, for example. Take beans or peas. These good vegetables are rich in both protein and starch. ... , also in cereal, contains some carbohydrate. Take cereals -- they also contain protein and starch. Even milk, rich in protein, contains some carbohydrate in the form of milk sugar. Starch and protein have been meeting in the human stomach for thousands of years and meeting pretty successfully. If this were a poisonous combination, the human race would have become extinct long ago.

So, listeners, if you want facts rather than fads, consult the findings of the standard nutrition authorities. They say: Don't worry about any combination of good food; eat meat and potatoes, sugar and milk, pickles, or cherries, or fish and milk in comfort. No two foods that are good for you separately will hurt you when you eat them together. In fact, the more variety of food you have in your meals, the safer you are. Instead of worrying about what not to eat, consider how to get in all the different foods you need, how to balance your meals with not only bread and meat and sweets but also a generous supply of vegetables, fruits and milk.

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